

THE
G R O U N D S
OF A
H O L Y L I F E:

OR,

THE WAY BY WHICH MANY WHO WERE
HEATHENS CAME TO BE CHRISTIANS;

AND

SUCH AS ARE NOW SINNERS, MAY COME TO BE
NUMBERED WITH SAINTS;

BY LITTLE PREACHING.

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TO THE READER.

MOST men will acknowledge, that the primitive churches, to whom Paul wrote his epistles, exceeded, in many respects, the professors of Christianity in our present age; and good grounds they have so to believe; for the said apostle, in his epistles, told the Corinthians, *That their bodies were the temples of the Holy Ghost*: he told the Ephesians, *That they were fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God*: he told the Philippians, *That their conversation was in heaven*: he told the Colossians, *That they were delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of the dear Son of God*: he told the Hebrews, *That they were come to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem*. And Peter, in his general epistle to the churches, told them, *That they were a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people*.

But is this our state? Can we say, from a sensible feeling, that the Holy Spirit of God dwells in us? That our bodies are the temples, in which we may behold his presence; feel his power; fear, worship, and serve him? Can we say that our conversations are in heaven? That we are translated into the kingdom of the dear Son of God, and live under the sceptre of his government? That we are come to the heavenly Jerusalem, where the great God is worshipped in spirit and in truth? Or are we not strangers to all these things, and yet persuade ourselves that we are the people of God, and good Christians?

The primitive churches had the honourable name of saints; we can give ourselves no better name than miserable sinners: and what is the reason? Most of the fore-mentioned churches, before their conversion, were but Heathens; they were not born of christian parents, nor trained up in the christian faith, as we think we are: and after conversion they had but little preaching, in comparison to what we have;

neither were they furnished with books so plentifully as we are.

We cannot conclude that the kingdom of Christ, that then appeared in power, did (as the sun in the firmament sometimes doth) shew itself in a morning, and be no more seen all day : for the kingdom of Christ is an everlasting kingdom, and the new covenant that was made with the house of Jacob an everlasting covenant. Neither may we conclude that God hath withdrawn himself from the children of men ; for he never forsakes us, unless we first forsake him.

The apostle foresaw that there would be a falling away from the grace in which many primitive Christians were established ; which soon after his decease came to pass. But our preachers say, “ That the dark night of apostasy is over, and that we live in gospel days again ; ” but if so, where are the fruits ? We may, I confess, hear gospel words ; but where is the gospel power, by which believers come to be the sons of God, and to bear his image

in righteousness? Why are not we, who are called Christians, grown to the stature of them that were born Heathens, and brought up in blindness and ignorance? Why are we not sanctified, and made a holy people, as well as they? Why are not our bodies cleansed, and made an habitation for the eternal Spirit, as theirs were? Why are not our conversations in heaven, or at least more heavenly than they be? the reason to me is this; we have not built upon the same foundation that they built upon; for this we are to understand, that the Heathens had not the Scriptures as we have, and so could not frame a form of godliness therefrom, as many since have done, made up with good words, calling that godliness, and resting in an outward performance thereof, without any true conversion, or sense of that inward life and power, that the primitive Christians came to feel, and found in themselves through faith, and the operation of the eternal quickening spirit of Jesus.

The Heathens, as well as others, were of God's creation (all nations being made of one

blood), and so had in themselves, as every man hath, a good spirit, as well as a bad ; light, as well as darkness ; something that reprov'd them for sin, as well as something that tempted them to sin. — And being, by the Apostle, turned from the darkness that was in them, to the light ; from that which tempted them to sin, to that which convicted and reprov'd them for sin ; they cleaved thereunto, confided therein, and became followers thereof : and by cleaving to the good, they were delivered from evil ; by following the light, they came to be translated out of the kingdom of darkness, and to have their conversations in heaven, whilst they were upon earth.

These built on a sure rock, a living foundation, on Christ, as he in all ages was, and still is, in his spiritual appearance, the light of the world, and the life of righteousness ; and, taking his eternal Spirit in themselves for their guide, turned from whatsoever they were thereby convicted of, and reprov'd for ; by which Esau, or the first nature, came to be supplant-

ed, and he, whose right it is to reign, came to have the rule in them, and the government over them.

And as the darkness that eclipsed the brightness of the sun of righteousness in them came to be removed, they came to have a clear discerning what was of God, and what was selfish, and to be denied; and, turning from every motion that was not of God, the body of sin became mortified, their insides became cleansed, the lump became leavened; such as were carnal became spiritual; and this made them a peculiar people.

And did we walk in their footsteps, we might rise to their attainment: but if we build on words, and outward services without spirit and life, we can never rise; for, as Paul said in another case, *If I speak with the tongue of men and angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass*: so, say I in this case, if we hear men and angels, if we could live continually under the sound of good words, if we

have no regard to that inward light which discovers the rising of evil motions, and power from God to turn from them, we can never mortify sin, cleanse our souls, and become a holy people. The work of sanctification is inward, and to be effected by inward means; nothing but inward light can expel inward darkness; nothing less than eternal life can deliver our souls from the power of death.

Since men came to be persuaded that though they sow tares, they shall reap wheat; though they go down into the grave sinners, they shall rise saints, and attain in another world what the primitive Christians attained to in this world; their conversations have not been in heaven, but in the earth; they have walked in darkness, and not in the light; the god of this world hath been served, and not the God of Heaven. And what future happiness this can produce, let the wise in heart judge.

THE

B

THE
GROUNDS
OF A
HOLY LIFE.

PAUL, in his epistle to the Galatians, chap. v. 16. had this saying, *Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.* And in his epistle to the Romans, chap. viii. 13. he had this saying, *If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.*—If ever scriptures were written for our learning, these scriptures were; for much may be learned therefrom.

The end of preaching, in our present age, and many ages past, hath been, that the sons and daughters of men might learn thereby to deny, turn from, and forsake every evil deed; and come to live a sober, righteous, godly life in this present world, that they might have peace with God in their own consciences here, and eternal life hereafter.

Now to effect this great work, in which thousands of labourers have for many years been employed, the apostle gives this short exhortation: *Walk in the Spirit*: affirming unto the Galatians, that if they walked in the Spirit, they should not fulfil the lusts of the flesh; they should not yield to evil motions, nor satisfy their carnal desires; which is the only way to mortify the deeds of the body, and cure all spiritual infirmities. But this way of God's salvation hath been so long rejected, that few in our present age know what this Spirit is, where they may have acquaintance therewith, or how they may walk therein. And that our understanding may be opened in this weighty concern, let us consider,

1. What Paul was, and how he came to be a gospel minister.
2. What the people were to whom he wrote those epistles.
3. What the apostle called flesh and spirit, and wherein we walk after them.
4. What we are to understand by his words, *die* and *live*.
5. How we may, through the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the body.

By reading the scriptures we may find, that Paul was an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham,

and brought up a scholar, well instructed in the law; and as to his religion, he was a Pharisee. And what were the Pharisees? Not a loose, profane people; but in outward appearance, a very religious people, zealous for their temple and the service thereof; with all other outward observations; insomuch that Jesus said of them, *That they made clean the outside of the cup and platter; which few now do.*

But when the time drew nigh, in which God would be no longer worshipped in temples made with hands, but would dwell in, and be worshipped by, sanctified hearts; and that the laws that were written by that great prophet Moses, for the house of Israel to observe and walk in, must no longer be a rule of righteousness; but Jews and Gentiles must walk by a law proceeding from the Spirit of God in their inward parts; when a greater than Moses was come, proclaiming a kingdom at hand, that consisted of a more excellent righteousness than theirs, testifying to the faces of those outside worshippers, that, notwithstanding their great zeal for the temple and the service thereof, they were but hypocrites and blind guides; — the rulers of those people were greatly offended; and, having a bitter spirit, notwithstanding their outside righteousness, endeavoured by persecution, to stop the coming of that

kingdom ; murdering the prince, and imprisoning his subjects. In which persecution none was more active than Paul, wasting the churches beyond measure.

But in the height of his persecution, not man, but God, put a stop to his proceedings, shewing him, that it was not men, but Christ in men, that he persecuted ; which was really so : for had not Christ, by his eternal Spirit, been in those men whom Paul persecuted, opening the eyes of their understandings to see the emptiness of all shadows, and to turn from them, Paul would have had nothing to say to them ; but they inclining to the worship of God in spirit, and slighting temple-worship, Paul looked upon them as a people not worthy to live.

But it pleased God to reveal in Paul the same Christ that he persecuted in others ; and that revelation, or inward knowledge of Christ, was the foundation of all Paul's knowledge in the mystery of godliness. He had not his future teaching from men, nor from books, but from the operation of the eternal Spirit of Jesus in himself. For keeping to the leading of that Spirit, he grew in grace ; and as he grew in grace, he grew in the knowledge of Christ, and so went not up to Jerusalem, to them who were apostles before him, for instructions or orders ; but in the strength of the Lord, with a

book of experiences in his heart, instead of a bible in his hand, he went into Arabia to preach the gospel to the Heathen. And what foundation did he lay? Not circumcision, which was the foundation of the Jews' religion: nor John's baptism, which since became the foundation of the Christian religion: for he told the Corinthians, that Christ did not send him to baptize, but to preach; and thanked God, that he baptized no more of them than Crispus and Gaius, and the household of Stephanus.

As Paul's eyes were then open to see the gift of God in himself, so his work was to open the eyes of others, that they might see the gift of God in themselves also.

Those Heathens had, as every man that cometh into the world hath, an inward light, that shewed them, as it sheweth us, what is right, and what is wrong; what is just, and what is unjust: though in their ignorance they might have as little regard thereunto as any of us now have.

As the kingdom of heaven consisteth of righteousness, Paul's work was to reduce those people to a righteous life and heavenly conversation. And what better foundation could any man lay, in order to a righteous life, than a light in ourselves, that shines continually, ma-

nifesting every unrighteous action ? A guide that, truly followed, will lead unto God, from whom, by unrighteous living, all men depart. This, Paul experienced ; and his experiences made him an able minister, capable of preaching without book or study, and confidently to affirm unto the Galatians, that their way to a righteous life, was to walk in the Spirit ; or to keep to this guide.

And thus have I shewn how Paul came to be a gospel minister : and now I shall shew what the people were, to whom he wrote his epistles.

The Romans and Galatians, before their conversion, were called Heathens, for they knew not the true God, but worshipped dumb idols. A people that lived, as too many now do, in all manner of ungodliness, walking, as Paul told the Ephesians, *according to the prince of the power of the air* ; but being turned from their darkness, became acquainted with this true light, which never consented to any unrighteous action.

To this light many of those Heathens turned, taking it for their guide, and confiding therein as a sure foundation ; which was true faith in him who was given for a light to the Gentiles, and one in nature with the faith of Abraham.

This people became convinced, though many of us are not, that after they were turned unto the Lord, they had a race to run. As from God and godliness they had departed, so to God and godliness they were to return.— They did not content themselves, as too many of us do, with a christian name; but following this leader, they walked in newness of life, sober, righteous, and godly, which Paul commended, telling the Galatians that they run well; and we should run well also, if we run the like race; growing, from day to day, more just, more upright, more honest, more faithful, and more circumspect: which cannot be expected until we take their guide for our leader.

But the churches of Galatia, being at that time, as Paul called them, little children, a people of small growth in the knowledge of the mystery of godliness, were by some, whom Paul wished cut off, persuaded, as many now are, that an upright, sober, godly life, and blameless conversation, was not enough; but they must be also in the exercise of some outward worship; and the Jews' religion carrying the greatest shew of godliness, they were persuaded to imitate their customs and observations.

But Paul, having experienced the insufficiency of outward services to change men's na-

tures, and reduce them to a righteous life, told the Galatians, *That if they were circumcised, Christ should profit them nothing.* If they went from an inward guide, to rest, as the zealous Pharisees did, on outward performances, he that was given for a light and a leader, would not be their light, nor their leader. And, indeed, nothing is more evident ; for if Christ be the way, if walking by the Spirit be the means, by which we must mortify sin, and come to a righteous life ; whosoever goeth from this way, whosoever slighteth this means, hath no more benefit by Christ, than a traveller that forsaketh his guide hath from his guide, in order to a righteous, godly life.

As Christ is a quickening spirit, it must be by following him in his spiritual manifestations, that a righteous life is recovered ; nothing less can change our natures, and make us new creatures ; and until we are new creatures, our conversations cannot be in heaven.

So the epistles of Paul were written to a people who were on their journey from death to life ; they were come out of Egypt, but not come to the promised land ; they were turned from their darkness, and had their faces Sionward, but were not come to the New Jerusalem, the city of God ; they had begun in the Spirit, but were not come to the true worship

in spirit; they had received Christ, but were not rooted and grounded in Christ: and to perfect what was begun, the apostle put them on nothing but this, *Walk in the Spirit*: keep to your inward guide, the light of righteousness, for it is that alone that can raise the sons and daughters of men from their fall, and bring them to a life of righteousness.

The third thing to be considered is, what the apostle calls flesh and spirit, and wherein we walk after them?

It is evident, that flesh and spirit are both leaders, otherwise we could not walk after them; and if leaders, our visible parts must be followers, bringing forth in our words and deeds what is in our hearts, or conceived in our minds: for every deed hath first a thought, either good or evil. Evil thoughts arise from that which Paul called flesh: good thoughts proceed from that which he called spirit. So then flesh and spirit is a root of evil, and a spring of good in ourselves.

From the flesh proceed all such motions as lead unto vice: from the Spirit proceed such doubts as we find in ourselves of yielding thereunto; and all the rebukes that follow us when we have suffered the enemy to prevail over us;

and those rebukes are in love unto us, as our rebukes are in love to our children, that they may stand in awe, and not offend.

As oft as we yield to evil motions, we give place to the devil; and whosoever yields to one evil motion, shall have another of the same kind; and the oftener we yield, the more ground he hath in us, and the more power he comes to have over us. And all the refuge that any man hath to fly unto, when evil motions arise, is that in his own heart, that Paul calls the Spirit, for that will not consent to any evil deed; and whosoever keeps close to that, keeps close to God; they abide with their guide, and *walk in the Spirit*.

The converted Heathens walked by this rule; they took the eternal Spirit of Christ in themselves for their guide; they confided therein, and became followers thereof; and that brought them to be a holy nation, and a peculiar people. And we should be the same, did we turn to this eternal Spirit in our own hearts, and order our conversations according to the leadings and guidings thereof; for keeping to this, we should not fulfil the deeds of the flesh.

The fourth thing to be considered is, what the Apostle intended by these words, *die and live*.

Certainly he did not, by the word *die*, intend a cessation of their mortal lives, for such a dying, in the Lord's appointed time, is common to all men; they that live after the Spirit, as well as they who walk after the flesh, must go down into the grave.

But the dying that the Apostle intended, was a decay of our inward life, a dying unto righteousness; which few in our present age take notice of: such a dying as the first man Adam died, when he fell from the government of the eternal Spirit, which was man's first state; or such a dying as the house of Israel died, when they stuck to outward observations, slighting justice, mercy, and an humble walking with their God.

Now such as walk after the flesh, living in the practice of any known sin, depart further from God, and come to have less life, less light, less grace, less fear of offending God, and injuring their neighbours; as we may see by men's conversations. And this decrease is a dying unto righteousness.

And as they that live after the flesh, have less life, less light, less grace, less fear; so such as walk after the Spirit, doing such things as are upright, honest, and of good report, from a principle in their own hearts, find an in-

crease; they come to have more life, more light, more grace, more fear of offending God, or their neighbour: and this increase is a living unto righteousness. As the one goes further from, so the other draws nearer to, the kingdom of heaven.

Had we not in ourselves spirit, as well as flesh; light, as well as darkness; a conductor in the way of life and salvation, as well as a leader in the paths of destruction; we might lay the loss of life, and all the calamities that sin brings, on Adam's score, or on the account of the wicked one, from whom all wicked motions proceed.

Paul was an expert doctor in divinity; he knew what corrupted the sons and daughters of men, and from whence all the ungodliness that is in the world doth arise; and to cleanse, to purge, to purify, to make Heathens become sound Christians, and sinners become saints, describes no other means but this, *Walk in the Spirit*. For as we keep to this, we shall learn, as the converted Heathens did, not only to deny ungodliness, but also to live godly in this present world.

But if we rest, as the zealous Pharisees did, in outward performances, accounting ourselves righteous because we have, as we are persuaded

ed, a right form of godliness, and make no use of the aforefaid means; though we have as great a zeal for our forms of godliness, as ever Paul had for the Jews' religion, it will profit us no more than circumcision would have profited the Galatians.

We have had much preaching and teaching; the joys of heaven promised to them that did well; the torments of hell threatened to them that did ill; but have these promises and threatenings made us a holy nation, and a peculiar people, exceeding all others for justice, equity, truth, and faithfulness? Have all the exhortations that we have had, enabled us to mortify the body of sin, which is the cause of ungodliness? Are we thereby translated, as the Heathens were, out of the region of darkness into the kingdom of the dear Son of God, so as to have our conversations in heaven, whilst our bodies are on earth? Can we say, *Old things are done away*, all exalted thoughts, all covetous inclinations, all wrath and bitterness; and these new things come in their places, humility, meekness, temperance, self-denial, with unfeigned love to God and our neighbour? Can we say, There was a time in which sin had such dominion over us, that we could not refrain from fulfilling the lusts of the flesh; but now we are so limited by the eternal Spirit,

that we must be temperate, we must be sober and vigilant, we must be just, upright, and faithful in word and deed. If this be our state, we are, as the primitive Christians were at their full attainments, *dead unto sin, and alive unto righteousness*: built upon the same rock as they were. But if we are not come to this, it would be our wisdom to turn to the Lord, as they did, and build on the same foundation that they built upon, *The true light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world*; that we may come to be acquainted with the eternal Spirit, as they were, and have a guide and leader in the paths of godliness, as they had; for it is by and through the assistance of the eternal Spirit of Jesus in our own hearts, that our corruptions must be purged out, and our insides made clean. For as our walking after the flesh made all wounds; so it must be our walking after the Spirit that must heal all wounds: as our living after the flesh was the growth of our unrighteousness; so by walking after the Spirit we mortify sin, and recover a life of righteousness.

Paul spoke from a good understanding, when he told the Romans, *That which may be known of God is manifest within*; there he had his knowledge in the mysteries of godliness: whatever he preached, whatever he wrote, the spring

was in himself. He knew no more of the operation of inward and spiritual grace than one of us, 'till he came to have his eyes inward, and to walk in the Spirit; and so he recommended to the churches what he had experienced.

Many can talk of redemption, justification, sanctification, and salvation by Christ: but he is a Christian who is a witness of such things wrought in himself. Such may properly be called learned men: they know what it is to rise, what it is to die, and what it is to live; what they are redeemed and saved from, and by what means.

The fifth thing to be considered is, how the sons and daughters of men may, through the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the body.

But first, we will consider, what deeds of the body are to be mortified; which, in general, are these: as an evil spirit in man is the root of all evil deeds, so every deed that proceeds from that root is to be mortified: and nothing can manifest such deeds, giving us a true sight thereof, but the Spirit of the Lord, or light of righteousness in our own hearts, as it comes to shine in brightness.

To know what deeds are to be mortified in all our attempts and undertakings, let us look

to our ends therein; if we have nothing in our eye but justice, equity, honesty, and plain dealings, we may go on with safety; but if self be the moving cause, if we have not an eye to our neighbour's interest as well as our own, pretend what we will, such deeds proceed from an evil root, and are to be denied; and in denying them, they come to be mortified. And what can manifest our ends in every action? Not books, nor preachers; but the Spirit of the Lord, which is an inward light.

But we do not find that Paul directly charged the Galatians with any manner of loose living, but with their *observing days and times*: and what harm could there be in that?

Though the Galatians might see none, Paul saw much, otherwise he would not have asked them, *Who had bewitched them?* They had begun in the Spirit; they had walked, for a season, after an inward guide, which is the only leader to such a life of righteousness as the Lord, in all ages, required of the sons and daughters of men; which was not a form of godliness without life, but truth in their inward parts: for if we have truth in our hearts, equity will be performed by our hands.

And to this Paul knew they could never come by imitating an outward worship, much less by

observing days and times (which in our present age is become the nursery of vice), and so counted it deeds of the flesh; reasoning thus with them, *Are ye so foolish, having begun in the Spirit, are ye made perfect by the flesh?* Which is all one as to say, Are ye so void of understanding, having begun to walk in newness of life, do you think to come to such perfection as to have your conversation in heaven whilst living on the earth, by going back to the performance of outward services? *This persuasion*, said he, *is not of him that called you.* And if it was not of God, it must be from the old deceiver; and many have been since deceived thereby, persuading themselves, that godliness consisteth in that which is called (but is not) true devotion, and not in a well ordered conversation; and so live in pride, covetousness, envy, and many other things, which are really deeds of the flesh; and never come so far as to mind a translation out of the kingdom of darkness, to live under the government of the eternal Spirit.

Man's fall was not from any outward religion or form of godliness, but from a life of righteousness: from a state in which husband, wife, parents, children, masters, servants, and all other relations, would have known their

place and duty, and been found therein : from a state in which the creatures, that God hath given for man's use, would have been used, and none of them, through excess, wasted or abused : from a state in which truth would have been found in our words, and equity in all our deeds : from a state in which the will of God would have been done on earth, as it is done in heaven, and the great God by us glorified, and not dishonoured. From this state, through the entrance and growth of sin, the sons and daughters of men are departed ; to this state the primitive Christians, through the mortification of sin, returned.

This was the life that the first Adam lost : this is the life that the second Adam came to recover. As many as have the Spirit of Christ, and become followers thereof, rise from their fall, return unto God, live under his government, and become witnesses of this life restored.

When I have looked upon that called the book of divine service, I have found as good words therein as could be collected out of the scriptures : not one to be admitted into the church without security, promising in their behalf as much as I have mentioned. The promises therein contained, were they but truly performed, would make us a holy nation, no way behind the chiefest of saints. For those

that rose highest, rose no higher than to *walk in God's commands all the days of their lives.*

But it is rare to find one man that performs that covenant, and the reason is this; we say the scriptures are our rule, but we keep not thereunto. Paul's advice is not followed, we do not *walk in the Spirit*: which if we did, the light of righteousness in our own hearts would shew us the risings of evil motions, and what they lead to; and that is the time to *forsake the devil and all his works, with all worldly vanities and sinful lusts*: for if we deny evil motions, we shall never be found in evil actions; and until we depart from evil, we cannot do the things that are good. Sin must be mortified before we can lead a righteous life: the works of the devil must be denied before the commands of our God can be walked in, one day, much less all the days of our lives.

And this Paul experienced, which made him with great confidence to say, *Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.* For if we deny and turn from every motion that the light of righteousness in our own hearts shews us to be evil, we shall not fulfil them, but shall mortify the root from whence they arise: for that which is not fed, in time comes to die.

By this the converted Heathens came to be a holy nation: this is the way to be citizens of the New Jerusalem: by this means the Colossians were, and we may be, translated into the kingdom of the dear Son of God, to live under his government: this is the kingdom that John the Baptist proclaimed to be then at hand: this is the kingdom that the disciples of Christ were to pray for the coming of: this is the kingdom that consisteth of righteousness, and standeth in power: this is the kingdom that all believers are first to seek: for under the government of the eternal Spirit of Jesus in their hearts, the sons and daughters of men are limited from doing any unrighteous thing.

Many of the present professors of Christianity are persuaded, that though they are unrighteous in their lives, yet being in the exercise of something called religion, it shall go well with them. But the living Lord doth not take notice what religion we are of, but what leader we follow; for let our religion be what it will, if we live after the flesh, we shall die. And, though little appears that is called religion, if we walk after the Spirit, if our conversation be in heaven, if truth be in our mouths, and equity performed by our hands, we shall live. But who are capable of walking after the Spirit, and through the Spirit, of mortifying the deeds of the body?

We may find many, even amongst us, who bear the name of Christians, that, through a perseverance in evil doing, are become dead in sin, having no sense or feeling of any thing in themselves that is of God: and such as have no acquaintance with the Spirit, cannot *walk after the Spirit*.

Others there are who are not dead, but dying; they have both sense and feeling; they have that in themselves that would lead them to better things than they practise, but have little or no regard thereunto; they take it not for their guide; and whilst they slight that in themselves which manifests the deeds of the body, they can in no wise mortify them.

But some may be found who are weary of their sins, and burthened with their iniquities, having in themselves a hunger and thirst after righteousness; and all such are living people, and capable, through the Spirit, of mortifying the deeds of the body.

Satisfied I am, that in our present age, many have been awakened from the sleep of sin, and have had in themselves a true hunger and thirst after righteousness; but being awakened by an outward ministry, from that, they expected to have their hunger and thirst satisfied.

Many may be awakened with, but they are not quickened by, an outward ministry ; *It is*, as Jesus said, *the Spirit that quickeneth* ; and what can raise life, but that which giveth life ? What can satisfy a soul that thirsteth after righteousness, but that which is in very truth the spring of righteousness ? It is in ourselves the well is to be found, that whosoever drinketh thereof shall never thirst ; there is the spring that floweth up unto everlasting life.

As the kingdom of heaven stands not in words, but in power ; so it is not words, but the power of God that can mortify the deeds of the body, change our nature, and make us new creatures.

Would words fill us with righteousness, justice, truth, equity, and faithfulness, we should have been a holy nation long since ; for there hath been no want of words, but there is still want of equity and faithfulness in mens' deeds.

Could good words reduce hearers to a righteous life, instead of saying, *Walk in the Spirit*, Paul would have said to the Galatians, *Hearken* to your minister : he would have had no need to have recommended unto them an inward guide. Paul's experience evidenced unto him, that it was not by hearing of words, but through his obedience to the law of the Spirit,

that he came to mortify the deeds of the body, and lead a righteous life : and what he found to be effectual in himself, that he recommended to the churches.

Words, though ever so numerous, may be forgot, they do not abide ; but the eternal Spirit abides, that is the teacher that can never be remoned into a corner. The use of words, in the work of salvation, is to awaken such who are asleep in sin, and to turn them, as Paul turned the Heathens, to an inward guide ; and for admonition, whilst they are on their journey, to keep with their guide.

Had such, who hungered and thirsted after righteousness, pressed after what they hungered for ; had they acquainted themselves with the eternal Spirit, that begot those desires, and followed the leading thereof, it would have rooted out pride and all selfishness ; it would have reduced them to an humble, lowly, meek, patient, peaceable frame, to keep their promises, to be just in all their dealings, to do the thing that was right at all times ; and this would have removed their burden, and given them rest and peace.

If we would be as the primitive Christians were, we must begin where they did ; we must

turn to the light of righteousness in our own hearts, and walk in that light until we become children of the light; we must walk in the just man's path by the guidings thereof, till righteousness becomes our centre. This made the primitive Christians a religious people indeed; by this they profited; otherwise the blind, ignorant Heathens, could not have come to be fellow-citizens with saints, and of the household of God.

Paul was no settled minister at any one place, they heard him but seldom; but they heard the voice of the eternal Spirit, as oft as they strayed from justice, equity, and faithfulness: and to this voice Christians ought to incline their ear; for, under the new covenant God doth speak unto his people by his Son through the eternal Spirit in their hearts.

The first step to a life of righteousness, is to acquaint ourselves with that in our own hearts that reproves us for unrighteousness; for until we come to this, we are strangers to the foundation of a right conversation: for all building, all journeying, all rising, all approaching near to the kingdom of God, depends on our denying, turning from, and utterly forsaking what the light of righteousness in our own hearts doth convict us of, and reprove us for; for by such denials the deeds of the body com-

to be mortified. As we make this our concern, and are faithful therein, our light shines more and more ; and the more light we have, the greater discovery it makes of what is evil, what is to be denied, turned from, and forsaken ; and guiding our steps by this, we build on the true foundation, we walk in the living way, we grow in grace and the knowledge of Christ, and draw nearer and nearer to his kingdom and righteous government ; and all power is felt in a righteous life.

This was the advice of Christ, *Strive to enter in at the strait gate* ; testifying, that the way to eternal life was narrow ; and what is this strait gate, and narrow way ? Not self-interest, nor yet self-righteousness.

Self-interest is the root of all covetous practices, fraudulent dealings, and unjust actions. Self-righteousness is the root of all formality and contention about religion, of which there hath been, and still is, too much in the Christian world, persecuting one another, as the unconverted Heathens did the primitive converts.

Neither of these paths lead to that kingdom that consists of righteousness and peace. Had the converted Heathens walked in these paths, they would not have been a holy nation ; their

conversations would have been in the earth, and not in heaven. But the strait gate, and narrow way, that leads to a righteous life, is self-denial ; a denying of every thing, the smallest concern, as well as things that seem weighty, proceeding from an evil root ; which nothing can manifest but an inward light, shining in its brightness. But with sorrow may we say, it is rare to find one amongst many, who lives in the practice of what he himself acknowledgeth to be right. Who is there but will confess, that to speak the truth on all occasions is a right thing ? Who is there but will allow, that to keep every promise, though it be to our hurt, is an honest thing ? Who is there but will grant, that to do unto all men as we would be done by, is a just thing ? Yet few live in the practice thereof ; and if we do not live in the practice of what we know to be right, what doth our knowledge profit us ? We may, as Israel in the wilderness did, keep moving ; but unless we walk in the narrow way, we can never come to a righteous life.

And so, if we do not wilfully shut our eyes, we may plainly see, that the way to a righteous life, is to *walk in the Spirit* ; to follow the leadings of an inward guide ; to deny and turn from what the light of righteousness in our own hearts manifests unto us to be unrighteous,

unjust, or dishonest. And by turning from evil, we come to embrace the good ; by forsaking vice, we come to be filled with virtue ; by dying unto sin, we come to be made alive unto righteousness ; truth, equity, and honesty, come to be uppermost, and we come to centre there. And to such, as Paul said, *There is no condemnation* ; they have the answer of a good conscience ; peace with God, and peace in themselves ; peace whilst they are here, and peace when they go hence.

CONSIDERATIONS,

GROUNDLED ON THE FOREGOING
DISCOURSE.

MAN was made, as many will acknowledge, to glorify God, and to do his will on earth: and that man might be capable of serving his Creator, according to his will, God gave him a measure of his good Spirit for an instructor; so that there was in man, as he was first created, much of God, much humility and meekness, much truth and faithfulness, much heavenly wisdom and understanding.

This eternal Spirit was to be man's head and leader, man's guide and instructor, in the paths of righteousness. On this Spirit man was to fix his eye; to this Spirit man was to incline his ear; by this Spirit man was to be governed; and so following this guide, this leader, and this instructor, man would have been capable of governing himself, and the creation over which he was made lord, according to the will of God.

Did mankind live under the government of this eternal Spirit, we should all bear the image of God; we should be all godly, humble, lowly,

meek, merciful, patient, peaceable, upright, and faithful ; right in all our ways, and just in all our works.

But man, not keeping with this guide, disobeys the command of his Maker ; and by yielding himself servant to another master, another spirit enters, as contrary in nature as darkness is to light : and as many as follow this leader serve not the God of heaven, but the god of this world : for every man is a servant to whom he obeys.

Now we being all the offspring of Adam in his fallen state, bear his likeness ; we have all in ourselves, good and evil, a seed of grace, and a seed of sin, called in scripture, light and darkness, flesh and spirit, the old man and new man, according to the growth of the seed in us, and the dominion that they come to have over us ; for as there is a difference between a seed and an herb, a plant and a tree, a child and a man ; so there is a difference in grace, and also in sin : according to its growth in us, so is the strength thereof felt by us, and the names given in scripture are answerable thereto.

For though we have all a seed of sin in us, we are not over-mastered therewith, nor captivated thereby, as soon as we are born : it must have a time to spring and grow in us, before

it comes to have dominion over us. And I may say the same of the seed of grace, for it is also of a growing kind: otherwise the kingdom of heaven, or government of Christ in the hearts of his people, would not have been compared to the seed of mustard, which, though it be but small when it is sown, yet through the springing and growth thereof, comes to be of a high stature.

We may find many in the world who are notoriously wicked, and much more wicked would they appear, were they not limited by an outward law: these were not so born; it is the growth of sin, and the dominion that it comes to have over men, that makes them notoriously wicked; for the seed of sin, as it comes to full growth in any of the sons and daughters of men, converts them into its own nature, by which they come to be habitually active in wickedness.

This was the devil's aim in Adam's fall, but his design being not then fully effected, he hath followed in all ages of the world, and at this day doth follow, the sons and daughters of men, putting in their minds evil motions attended with various temptations, displaying false colours, and putting a more beautiful gloss on things forbidden, than fallen men can see in paths of righteousness. And all his evil moti-

ons, temptations, baits, snares, lures, and false colours, are to effect his first design, that we being taken therewith, and led away thereby, might forget God, and cause him to take his Holy Spirit from us; for till then, the god of this world can call no man his own; we may be his captives, but he hath not the whole dominion over us.

In our present age, light within, a law within, spirit within, Christ within, is the scoffing of some, and little regarded by many: but whether they know it or not, I must tell them, they scoff and slight the chiefest treasure that ever the soul of any man was possessed of; they slight the talent that God hath given to every man to improve, in order to their rising from their fall, and returning to their native country, to live under the government of the eternal Spirit. Whosoever is without Spirit and light within, is without God in the world. Take away this treasure, and we shall have nothing in us that is good: we shall be left quite graceless.

We read of Jacob and Esau, who were lively figures of these two seeds in man, how they struggled whilst they were in the womb of Rebecca.

And as there was a struggling between the seed of two nations in the womb of Rebec-

ca, so there is a struggling between the seed of two kingdoms in every man, which shall rise to rule in us, and to have the whole dominion over us.

As we are born into the world, we are all innocent ; though we have a seed of sin in us, we are not actual sinners, until we yield to some sinful motion proceeding therefrom : which the devil knows, though many are of another persuasion. And that the seed which he hath sown may spring and grow, that an evil spirit may come to have the rule in us, he begins to struggle betimes, before we well know the right hand from the left : and where vice is not kept down by careful parents, or guardians, it quickly gets head ; and such may say, as many do, *That there is no good thing in us.* For, through the speedy growth of that which is evil, they never have any acquaintance with that which is good, except inward rebukes, which few will acknowledge to be of God.

For as weeds left to grow in a garden overshadow and keep down herbs, so that they cannot grow ; so doth vice suppress virtue, and make God's creation such strangers to their Creator, that though in him they live, move, and have their being, yet they are without sense or feeling of his presence.

And as all evil motions that lead unto sin, all baits, snares, and lures, that we meet with in the course of our lives, are the strugglings and strivings of the evil seed; so all calls that we find in ourselves for justice, equity, honesty, truth, and faithfulness, with all inward checks, rebukes, and convictions, are the strugglings and strivings of the good seed: for if these things are hearkened unto, obeyed, followed after, and lived in, they keep down the growth of vice; so that though we have a root of sin in us, it remains powerless; it doth not rise and come to reign over us.

In which suppressing of vice, in order to the growth of virtue, parents and guardians ought to be much concerned: for as the wicked one takes the advantage of our childhood, to make us commit evil, before we have any acquaintance with that which is good; parents and guardians, like faithful weeders, should eye, suppress, keep down, and use all endeavours to root out every vice as soon as it appears, till grace grows, and a right spirit comes to reign in them, and have the rule over them.

But this is our present state: as Esau by his struggling came to be the first-born in days past; so iniquity, through the early rising of the subtle serpent, is the first-born still. And

though most parents, in the Christian world, are careful to provide weeders betimes, almost as soon as a child is born, yet few weeds do they root up; and many parents none at all; by which great neglect, most children come to be wild, stubborn, self-willed, disobedient to parents, and very ungodly in their lives. But the ground of all ungodliness is the growth of that seed which the wicked one sowed. And how may vice be brought down when it is come to a head? Not by parents, not by guardians, not by sureties, and I may say, not by preachers: but as it was Jacob that supplanted Esau, so it must be grace that must supplant sin. We see, notwithstanding all preaching, more pride and haughtiness, than humility and meekness; more fraudulent dealing and contentious practices, than self-denial; more seeking the world and the vanities thereof, than the kingdom of heaven, and the righteousness thereof. And thus it will be whilst the first-born is uppermost.

And if we would have the first-born supplanted; if we would have that which strives to deprive us of life, light, and grace, and all goodness, made powerless; if we would have that suppressed, which continually labours to make us servants to sin, and bond-slaves to Satan; if we would see the death of that which makes us incapable of glorifying God in our

lives; if we would be, as the primitive Christians were, delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of the dear Son of God, to live under the government of his eternal Spirit, which was man's first state; let us consider, how that which hinders came to rise, and by what means it may be brought down.

I have said, and say again, that it is not the indwelling, but the growth, of an evil seed, that makes the sons and daughters of men proud, haughty, high-minded, envious, cruel, merciless, fraudulent, and ungodly; darkening their understandings, and making them strangers to the gift of God in themselves. And the growth of this evil seed, stands in our often yielding to such evil motions as proceed therefrom, and that, the subtle serpent knows; and we may know it also, from the manifold temptations we have thereunto, especially where he finds them to be effectual.

Who ever yielded to any evil motion, committing sin, and taking pleasure therein, that hath not been tempted again to the same thing? Or who is there that doth not know, that the oftener we yield to any temptation, the stronger our temptations are, and the harder to be denied? And by every yielding, this sin riseth, and comes to have more power over us.

And if it be by our yielding to evil motions that the evil spirit riseth, and comes to have power over us, it must be by denying evil motions that he must be supplanted, and made powerless in us.

Whosoever will be a follower of Christ, must first learn to deny himself. We must turn from whatsoever the eternal light in our own hearts shews us to be selfish, though it may seem ever so much to our disadvantage; and by denying ourselves, we shall abundantly deny the author of all evil motions.

Pride, pleasure, and unrighteous gain, are baits that have caught many; all which, with many other things, we must deny and turn from, if we will be followers of Christ in a righteous life: and by such denials we shall find the root of iniquity wither, and grace grow; sinful motions will diminish, and heavenly desires will increase; the small seed will become the tallest of herbs; and the lump come to be one in nature with the leaven.

But this denial must be whilst the cockatrice is yet in the shell; whilst sin is in the motion, before it comes to action; for sinful motions may be turned from, but sinful actions are past recal. And what can shew us the rising of evil motions? Preachers cannot; books cannot;

nothing that is without, can effectually shew us what is within ; it must be an inward light ; it must be the candle of the Lord, the eternal Spirit, that was in the beginning given unto man for an instructor.

There were in the creation good men, faithful men, self-denying men, when there were no preachers, nor books, that we read of: and who was their teacher, but the eternal Spirit ? What guide had they but the light of righteousness in their own hearts ? And did our present preachers make it their concern, to turn people's minds to eye this inward guide, and to become faithful followers thereof, we should have more good men, faithful men, and self-denying men, than can now be found.

Men or angels could not give better advice to a people, that was turned to this inward light, than Paul gave the Galatians, when he exhorted them to *Walk in the Spirit*; for if we are not guided by a right spirit, we can never lead a righteous life.

As the seed of sin grows and waxeth strong in us by our yielding to evil motions, so the seed of grace grows and waxeth strong in us by the denying of evil motions: the putting off of the old man, is the putting on the new ; and it is the new man that makes any of us to

be new creatures, and to bring forth, in the course of our lives, a new and heavenly conversation.

If we do not come to a denial of evil motions, and to live in a continual exercise thereof, though we hear preachers all the days of our lives, we shall be but as the door on the hinges, or as Israel in the wilderness, often moving; yet as short of a righteous life, as they that then came out of Egypt were of having peaceable possessions in the promised land.

We cannot come to a righteous life, until our lights shine with such brightness, that we can see the rising of all evil motions at a distance: for as grace comes to be uppermost, the root of iniquity will be lowermost; as the one comes to be before our faces, the other will be behind our backs.

Our conversation is not in heaven, till truth comes to be in all our words, equity in all our deeds, and faithfulness in all our promises; this makes the sons and daughters of men a holy nation, and a peculiar people; this makes such as were Heathens to be true Christians; and such as were the vilest of sinners, worthy of the honourable name of saints.

Whence come pride and haughtiness, contention and strife, fraud and deceit, oppression

and cruelty, but from the author of all wickedness? Where the flesh, with the affections thereof, is crucified, such things are not to be found; and, let us pretend to what religion we will, whilst such things are practised, we keep alive what ought to be mortified.

Where an evil spirit is uppermost, men know no limit; their ears, eyes, tongues, hands, and feet, are at liberty to hear evil reports, behold vanity, speak proudly, rashly, unadvisedly, and deceitfully; to do violence, take bribes, and go where they list.

But where a right spirit rules, every member of the body is under a limit; the ear is turned from fables, and the eye from beholding vanity; they cannot, as too many do, cover, dissemble, and lie, to accomplish self ends: vain communication is not allowed to come out of their mouths; their hands are limited from taking bribes, using of violence, or doing any wrong; the paths of rioters they cannot walk in, but are lovers of righteousness, and haters of iniquity in themselves and others. And to this estate we might all come, by denying such motions as the light of righteousness in our own hearts manifests to be evil.

And now my advice to all professors of Christianity is, that instead of contending about

forms of godliness, they take heed to that in themselves which leads to godliness ; instead of searching the scriptures for a right form, they would labour to live under the government of a right spirit ; for such are delivered from the power of darkness, and return to Sion the city of God, and to the New Jerusalem, where God is known and truly worshipped.

One thing more I would have the reader to consider, and that is this, Though every man that cometh into the world is attended with two spirits, yet he can have but one Lord ; and he is Lord that hath the whole rule over us.

The right of government, in all men, belongs to the eternal Spirit, that was with the Father before the world began, called in scripture the spirit of Christ ; for in Jesus, the second Adam, no other spirit dwelt. He was not attended with two spirits, as the offspring of fallen Adam are : he had not in himself light and darkness, good and evil, a seed of grace, and a seed of sin : but he was, as the scripture saith, *full of grace, and full of truth*. In him was life, even the life that the first Adam lost, a spring of righteousness ; and this life he retained, though his temptations far exceeded those of Eve, and so did keep out the evil spirit, which is the author of all wickedness. Though he lived many years on earth,

and met with many provocations, he was, in the whole course of his life, humble, lowly, meek, merciful, patient, peaceable, just, and faithful; and therein fulfilled all righteousness, and so did the will of God on earth.

And the seed of grace in every man, is one in nature with the fulness that dwelt in him; and as this seed springs in any of us, and grows to strength and stature, it makes us conformable to his image. The more grace any man hath, the more humble, meek, and merciful he is; the more light any of us have, the greater discovery it makes of what is amiss in ourselves and others; the more truth dwells in us, the less fraud and deceit is wrought by us.

And as we walk in the light, we shall grow in grace, and *add to our faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity*; by which, as Peter said, *an entrance will be ministered unto us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of Christ*. A right spirit will come to be exalted in us, and to have alone the rule and government over us; and under the government of a right spirit, we shall bring forth a right conversation, acceptable in the sight of God.

Now the prince of darkness, being an enemy to all righteousness, useth all endeavours to

blind the eyes of our understanding, and to keep us strangers to this righteous seed, which is the spring of all grace and virtue, that he may draw us away from God and all godliness: and as such as walk in the light of the Lord, add virtue to virtue, until they are filled with righteousness; so such as follow the leadings of an evil spirit, add vice to vice, until they come to be filled with wickedness; and all such have likewise but one lord; the prince of the power of darkness hath the whole rule over them. And these two states are called in scripture, life and death.

Every man, as he cometh into the world, hath, as I may say, life and salvation before him, death and destruction behind him, and both at a distance from him: he hath also a good spirit to conduct him in the way of life and salvation, and an evil spirit waits to lead him in the path of death and destruction; and most men are strangers to both, although they be in them. And the preaching of the gospel was, and ought still to be, for the opening of such blind eyes, to see the working of these two spirits in themselves, and the leadings thereof, that they might turn from the evil, and become followers of that which is good, that He, whose right it is, might come to have the rule in them and over them.

And certain I am, that though many are ignorant of these things, many may be found who have some sight, some sense, and some feeling of the eternal Spirit of Jesus: they have the knowledge of something in themselves, that calls for just weights and an equal balance, for doing unto all men as they would be done by, for truth in their words, and faithfulness in their promises; so that did they keep to this, they would follow a right guide, and the seed of grace would grow; truth and faithfulness would grow: knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, and charity, would grow; and we should find in ourselves, that an entrance into the kingdom of Christ would be abundantly administered.

But whilst the evil spirit remains unmortified, self stands in our way; and to accomplish self ends, an equal balance is not kept, justice is not done, equity is not performed, promises are not kept, undertakings are not faithfully managed, the fashions and customs of this sinful world are not forsaken; and that hinders the growth of the righteous seed; for as there was no bringing down of the Canaanites whilst there was an accursed thing in the camp; so there is no bringing down the strength of sin whilst we have more regard to self than a Saviour; and that which manifests self is light; by it we see to what every evil motion doth

lead, and walking in the light, we walk in the way of God's salvation.

But some may say of this eternal life, as wicked men and sons of Belial said of Saul, the chosen of the Lord, *How shall this man save us?* What can the taking heed to this light advantage us? We find in ourselves rebukes for sin, but we find nothing in ourselves to save us from sin.

To all such I have this to say, Christ was given to the Gentiles for a light and for a leader. Whilst we are in the nature of the Gentiles, whilst we walk after the flesh, whilst we follow evil motions, we are departed from God, we are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and are strangers to the new covenant that God made with the house of Jacob; and in that state we cannot know Christ the Saviour of the world, any otherwise than as a reprover; but those reproofs, being reproofs of instruction, are the way to life, even to that life that the first Adam through transgression lost.

For if at those reproofs we turn from such things as we are reprov'd for, whether it be idle communication, intemperate living, unjust dealing, pride, passion, or any other vice, that the evil spirit of this world leads unto; and follow after righteousness, doing such things

as are just, upright, honest, and of good report; rebukes will cease, and our reprover will become our leader; that which was behind our backs, will be before our faces; and that which would have led us, will pursue us, as Pharaoh pursued Israel, to bring us back to our old manner of living again, and then we shall find Christ to be our Saviour. As many as followed Saul, saw how he saved them from their outward enemies; and all that come to be followers of the eternal Spirit of Jesus, do see how he saves them from spiritual enemies.

Whilst we follow motions of sin, we follow a wrong guide, and in that path we may know the prevailing power of sin, but can never know the restraining power of grace. It is to as many as receive Christ that he gives power; and none receive him, but such as turn from their iniquities at his reproof, and confide in him for a Saviour; such truly believe in his name.

I grant, that the shining of an inward light, which is the first manifestation of Christ to the sons and daughters of men, seems at first small and powerless; and so do our first motions to sin: but follow such sinful motions as far as they will lead, and we shall find them powerful enough. May not many be found at this day, even amongst us who are called Christians, so captivated under the power of sin, that

a bond-slave, who is held in chains of iron, can easier break his bonds, arise, depart, and return unto his native country, than they can cease from iniquity, rise from their fall, and lead a sober, righteous, godly life.

And if the seed of sin come, by our following the motions thereof, to have such power over us, why may not the seed of grace, if we return thereunto, and become followers thereof, have as much power over us ?

Undoubtedly John, who had travelled from death to life, and was an eye-witness of things as they were in the beginning, felt in himself such a power, when he said, *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remains in him, and he cannot sin.* And many living witnesses may be found, at this day, who can say, from a sensible experience, That where this righteous seed is risen, and comes to have dominion, it is so powerful and restraining, that they cannot be unjust in their dealings, nor unfaithful in their promises ; they cannot tell an untruth, though ever so much to their outward advantage ; they cannot be intemperate, wasting the good creatures that God hath given for their nourishment, by excessive eating and drinking ; they cannot oppress the poor, the widow, and fatherless, nor take by violence that which they have no right unto : the small

seed in them is become the tallest of herbs, and hath as much power over them, as sin hath over such who dwell therein.

These are, as the Colossians were, delivered from the power of darkness; these have, as the Philippians had, their conversation in heaven; these glorify God in their lives, and so answer the end of their creation.

Much preaching hath made many godly talkers; but it is grace in the heart, and truth in our inward parts, that make godly livers. And to a fulness of this heavenly treasure none of us can attain, but by denying such motions as the eternal light of righteousness, in our inward parts, shews us to be unjust and dishonest; for in denying the evil, we chuse the good; and as the growth of sin stands in our ill-doing, so the growth of grace stands in our well-doing.

Our ancestors have told us, *That there was more honesty and plain-dealing amongst men in ages past, when there was less preaching, than can be found amongst men now.* And their saying I can easily believe; knowing that it is a true self-denial, and not the hearing of preachers, that must mortify sin, change our nature, and make us new creatures; which is the ground of all honesty and plain-dealing.

And of this true self-denial, I am apt to think, we have much less than former generations had ; for we see, though preaching abounds, pride, covetous practices, with many other vices, super-abound : and the reason to me is this, conformity to outward forms of worship, being more taking with people than the strait gate and narrow way of self-denial, hath in our present age gotten the name of religion, Christianity, and true godliness ; inso-much, that should a man add to his faith, virtue and all other graces, by which an entrance into the everlasting kingdom of Christ is abundantly ministered, if there be not withal a conformity to some outward way of worship, he shall not pass for a godly man. Nay, though his conversation be ever so heavenly ; though he be humble, lowly, meek, patient, peaceable ; though truth be in all his words, equity and faithfulness in all his deeds ; though he visits the fatherless and the widow, and keeps himself unspotted from the world ; if he be not in the exercise of some outward form of godliness, he shall not be counted religious, nor hardly a Christian.*

Conformity in every sect, opinion, or persuasion, is become the character of a religious

* But it is not hereby intended to discourage the assembling of ourselves together for the public worship of Almighty God, agreeable to the advice of the Apostle, Heb. x. 25.

man, and the only band of unity and brotherhood; if this fail, there soon comes an estrangement: and so there is much pressing into conformities, but little minding the mortification of sin, in order to a life of righteousness. But, let our zeal for conformity be ever so much, it is he that ordereth his conversation aright, that shall see the salvation of God.

The conformity that the living Lord requires, is a conformity to the image of Christ in the course of our lives, to be *holy as he was holy*; without which we cannot be, as the primitive Christians were, of the household of God; we are not come to the New Jerusalem, and so cannot be fellow-citizens with saints. Though we bear the primitive Christians name, we are not in the primitive Christians nature; the first-born is not so brought down, as to have a right spirit alone to rule in us, and to have the dominion over us.

If the sayings contained in this book seem strange unto the reader, it is because the reader is a stranger to the primitive Christians life: if he who was their head and leader, were become ours; had we fellowship with them, as they had with Christ; we should have an echo in ourselves, answering to what is here said; our hearts would say, *It is so*.

And the way to come to their righteous life, is to walk in the light, denying and turning from the least thing that it shall manifest unto us to be evil. At the beginning of our journey, it will seem a strait and narrow way; but after we have travelled on awhile, we shall run therein with great delight. For the kingdom of heaven, or Christ's government by his eternal spirit in the hearts of his people, doth not consist of righteousness alone: the righteousness that proceeds from a right spirit, is accompanied with peace and joy: as ill-doing is attended with trouble and sorrow, well-doing is attended with peace and joy. All the pleasures of wickedness, that the whole world affords, are not to be compared to the joys of a righteous life. Every evil motion we deny, in obedience unto Christ, affordeth a superior joy to that which a warrior hath in battle, when his enemy flies before him.

The Jews counted themselves more holy than the Gentiles, though both made of one blood; and as both were the offspring of Adam, both had in themselves good and evil. But to the Jews the Lord gave laws, statutes, and judgments, for a rule of righteousness; and they, conforming thereunto in worship and outward services, counted themselves, as we who are called Christians do, holier than the Heathen.

But this was a selfish persuasion in the Jews, and no better in us who are called Christians, whilst we continue in a state of degeneration : for no outward conformity, without inward sanctification, can make any man holy ; and no man is sanctified, till sin is mortified.

When the Heathens, through the preaching of the gospel, turned from their darkness, and came to be followers of the eternal Spirit, thereby mortifying the strength of sin, they were more holy than many of the Jews, and called by the Apostle Saints ; which was more suitable than the name of Christians ; which was at first given in derision to the followers of Christ, by the unconverted Heathens at Antioch, and but once sincerely mentioned in all the scripture ; but the name of saints is peculiar to all truly sanctified souls.

As circumcision gave many the name of Jews, so the imitating of John's baptism hath given many the name of Christians ; but nothing can give Jew or Christian the name of a saint, in truth, but an heart made pure, single, upright, and honest, through the mortification of sin, called in scripture *The baptism of the Holy Ghost* ; for that is effected not by any outward means, but by our walking after the Holy Ghost. 'Till this is wrought, though we have a Christian name, we cannot bring

forth a heavenly conversation, and so the name profiteth little.

For we who are called Christians, as we are born into the world, have in ourselves a seed of sin as well as others ; and for want of faithful weeders to root up vice as it appears, iniquity grows to that height, that nothing less than the powerful Spirit of Christ can bring it down ; and from such who remain strangers to the working of this Spirit, a cry hath gone forth, *That there is no freedom from sin on this side the grave* : but the Colossians, who were delivered from the power of darkness, knew better things ; and so should we, if we did turn from iniquity, acquaint ourselves with their guide, and walk in newness of life.

A numberless number at this day bear the Christian name, because it is easily obtained : nothing is required at the receiving of it but promises. But small is the number of saints, because no man can be a saint, but by a performance of those promises ; and that no man can do, until he turn to that in himself which manifests the works of the devil ; and, on discovery thereof, deny, turn from, and quite forsake them. By taking this away, and using this means, sin will certainly be mortified, the soul sanctified, and such as were sinners will come to be saints.

But as nothing discouraged the camp of Israel from going up to possess the land of Canaan, more than the report that ten spies gave of the strength of the people that dwelt therein; so nothing discourageth awakened souls from pressing after a life of righteousness, more than the report that hath been given by professors of godliness concerning the strength of sin, that it could not be overcome: when they that so reported never made trial in the way of God's salvation.

All the spies spake well of the land, as all sorts of people now do of a sober, righteous, godly life and conversation: all will commend humility, meekness, moderation, temperance, patience, chastity, and, above all, plain, upright, honest, just dealings, though they do not practise them; and nothing hinders but this, the evil spirit of this world is uppermost, and few endeavour, in God's way, to bring it down.

Had the camp of Israel made them a captain, and gone back into Egypt, they could never have subdued the Canaanites: and whilst we allow ourselves to live in sin, it is impossible we should subdue it, for we strengthen what we should mortify. The Canaanites were made weak by war, and so must the strength of sin; with this difference; theirs was an actual war, and ours must be defensive. When,

by the candle of the Lord that shines in our souls, we see an aspiring thought, a lustful desire, a covetous inclination, or any other evil motion ; if we stand on our guard, and deny it entrance into our affection, it will retreat, and, after many attempts, being still put back, will hardly attempt any more ; at most, the motions thereof will be but weak.

Whilst there was an accursed thing in the camp, the enemy prevailed, and Israel retreated : and so it is at this day ; if we cover, if we hide, if we justify what our own hearts condemn, the evil prevails, and the good retreats.

Let us but accustom ourselves to true denials, and the strength of sin will, from day to day, be weakened ; and as Joshua and Caleb said, *The Lord will be with us* ; his grace will be in our hearts, and his fear before our eyes ; truth, equity, and honesty, will be uppermost ; and then it will be as easy to lead a sober, righteous, godly life, as ever it was to live a loose and ungodly life : for though something of sin may remain in us, as some of the Canaanites remained in the good land, it will be powerless as they were ; and all our members that were servants to sin, will become servants to righteousness, as it is written, *The elder shall serve the younger.*

But if we rebel against the Lord, by joining with motions of sin, as many who are called Christians, as well as Heathens, do; this war will be over before it is begun; that which is uppermost, will continue so; and as we live, so we shall die, receiving wages, not according to our words, but, according to our works: and then we shall know that a Christian name, without a Christian conversation, will stand us in little stead; for it is not he that is overcome, but he that overcometh, that the second death shall not hurt.

THE END.

but if we look at the Lord by joining
the millions of us, as many who are called
Christians, as well as the others, do, this way
will be easy to see it is because, that which is
important, will continue to, and as we live,
it will be the same, as a following
in our words, but our works:
and then we shall know that a Christian name,
of our a Christian conversion, will stand
in the Lord's hand, and it is not the first is over-
come, but the real conversion, then the second
shall not fail.

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THE END.